**Occupy Melbourne protesters forcibly removed from City Square**

*Anne Wright, Amelia Harris*

October 21, 2011



[Watch](http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/victoria/boot-out-protesters-says-businesses/story-fn7x8me2-1226172294310)

**Time to go**

Police in full riot gear with batons drawn were used to clear the protesters at City Square with hundreds more watching on with iPhones and cameras recording every move.

The last of the protesters were dragged out about 1pm, with an estimated 100-200 people taken away.

Protesters were forced to move down Swanson Street towards Trades Hall, where they were tonight deciding their next move.

The chaos was sparked after about 100 Occupy Melbourne demonstrators, who had camped out in the City Square for a week as part of global protests against corporate greed, defied an order to leave by 9am today.  
 **People injured**

Amid continued chanting, at least one woman was knocked unconscious in the mayhem. About 20 protesters were injured, with one being taken to hospital.   
  
Two police officers were also injured in the scuffles, with one taken to hospital to have his eye flushed out and the other suffering mouth injuries.

Some protesters resisted police and attempted to lay on the ground, while others sported bloody faces as the ugly scenes marred Melbourne's CBD.

Assistant Commissioner Stephen Fontana denied police used excessive force. He said protesters were given plenty of time to peacefully remove themselves from the City Square.

"We've tried to use whatever force is necessary, we didn't want to set out to have that excessive force used against people," he said.

"Our members are trained for these situations. Yes we do have to use force, we've tried to use the minimum amount of force necessary to clear the city and the City Square.

"We don't really want to engage in this sort of activity but we're not going to back down either."

He said police boosted numbers from 150 to more than 400, in line with the increase in protesters.

"We will continue to keep moving through until we have cleared the streets," he said.

"They've had more than ample time to make their point in terms of what their protest is about and I think it's time to give the City Square back to the citizens of Melbourne."

He said paramedics had checked every person taken into custody.

He said police were preparing for the possibility of further protests early this evening and in the coming days and that resources were available to handle any further action.

**Messy aftermath**

City Square and the surrounding streets were strewn with debris with at least five council trucks brought in to clean up the mess.

Defiant protesters this morning formed a human chain, attaching themselves to each other with cable ties and chanting loudly.

They formed a makeshift barricade using water barriers, upturned furniture and milk crates.



**Occupy Melbourne protest chaos**

Police use force to remove a staunch group of Occupy Melbourne protesters from City Square. [Play](http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/victoria/boot-out-protesters-says-businesses/story-fn7x8me2-1226172294310)

Early this morning, a council officer read a notice ordering the protesters to leave because they were not following the council's 2009 activities local law by camping, hanging or placing objects and things over the city square. They were ordered to pack up their tents and leave.

"If you do not comply with this direction in the time provided we will be preferring the matter to the Victoria Police and you may be subject to further enforcement proceedings and or trespass," the council officer said.

**Joint decision**

Lord Mayor Robert Doyle challenged protesters to show integrity and leave the City Square peacefully or be forcibly removed.

Cr Doyle said the Occupy Melbourne activists had caused at least $15,000 damage to the area.

"If they were to go peacefully my view is they would do their cause great credit and people would say, 'Fair enough, you made a point, it’s a pretty remarkable thing to occupy the centre of the city for a week' …I think it would be the best underscoring of their cause – or they could turn in to a rabble that needs to be removed forcibly, which would be ugly and I think damage the credibly of their cause," Cr Doyle told 3AW.



**A protester is held by police. Picture: Mike Keating**

Cr Doyle said the protesters had disrupted cultural events booked for the square over the week - including Jewish and Indian festivals – and said nearby traders had suffered.

He said it was a joint decision by the City of Melbourne and Victoria Police to remove the protesters.

He denied the Queen’s visit was a factor.

“The life of the City Square is the life of the city, and for any one group to think that they can capture it and then occupy it and control it is wrong,” Cr Doyle said.

He said it would take the council up to two days to clean the space, which would be shut off, and features such as the water fountain would have to be repaired.

Lawyers working for the protesters told members they could leave if they wished and to remain calm and respectful and to say "no comment" if they were asked any questions.

Protester David Schoeffel remained defiant, saying he didn't think the group's points had been made and didn't plan to leave.

"It (the protest) is indefinite," he said.

Premier Ted Baillieu yesterday echoed Cr Doyle's call for the protesters to move along.

"I share the view that people have a right to protest. They should do it in a way that does not cause disruption and my advice to them is: time to move along," he said.

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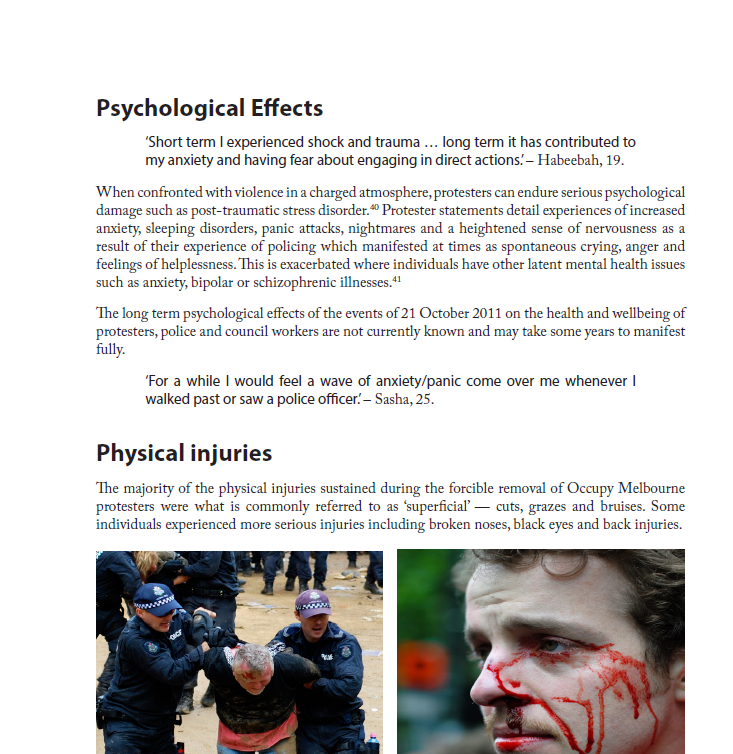
**Report on the Occupy Melbourne Eviction on 21 October 2011**

One year on from the controversial eviction of Occupy Melbourne from the City Square a qualitative Report, Occupy Policing: A Report into the Effects and Legality of the Eviction of Occupy Melbourne from City Square on 21 October 2011, documents protesters’ experiences of policing. The Report complements these eye-witness accounts with an account of the relevant laws.

The Report makes several key findings including:

* The policing of protesters had harmful and lasting psychological, physical and political effects on individual protestors as well as the right to political expression;
* The various justifications relied upon by Melbourne City Council and Victoria Police to authorise their actions raise serious and as yet unresolved questions of law. There appears to be a lack of legal basis for the actions to forcibly remove Occupy Melbourne protesters from City Square on the 21 October 2011;
* There was extensive use of force by police in arresting and policing protestors, including the use of chokeholds and ‘snatch squads’; and
* The police arguably acted outside of their legitimate powers and internal guidelines in detaining approximately 100 people pursuant to ‘breach of the peace’ powers. The place, conditions and length of detention varied, and protester statements attest to their disorientating and distressing effects.

The Report’s recommendations reiterate previous calls for an Independent Inquiry into the forcible removal of Occupy Melbourne.





‘The level of police violence on the 21 October 2011 shocked the national and international community. The experiences documented in this Report speak to excessive and unnecessary levels of violence’ said Rhys Aconley-Jones, Report co-author.

‘The widespread and public inquiry called for by the Occupy Melbourne Legal Support Team to look at all levels of decision-making into the policing of the protest is not only necessary to restore the community’s faith that the rule of law still operates in Victoria, but is required under international human rights law where allegations of human rights abuses have been made’ Tamar Hopkins writes.

**Exercise**

Write to the City of Melbourne Mayor Robert Doyle at:

Hon Lord Mayor Robert Doyle

City of Melbourne  
GPO Box 1603  
Melbourne VIC 3001

What powers should police have to evict protesters from public spaces?

Do you think the police did the right thing in evicting the protestors from Occupy Melbourne last year?

Should there be an independent inquiry into the Occupy Melbourne eviction?